

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 200850Z FEB 75
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8130
INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 2214

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLOS EWWT IMCO
SUBJ: GOI PROPOSAL TO GOS ON LIMITATION OF SUPERTANKER PASSAGE
OF MALACCA/SINGAPORE STRAITS

REF: STATE 029561

SUMMARY: IN BID FOR SINGAPORE SUPPORT ON TRANSIT REGULATIONS,
GOI HAS REPORTEDLY PROPOSED THAT ANY NEW TONNAGE AND DRAFT
RESTRICTIONS BE WAIVED FOR SUPER TANKERS BOUND TO OR
FROM SINGAPOREAN OIL REFINERIES. GOS VICE PM HAS TOLD
JAPANESE AMBASSADOR THAT SINGAPORE CABINET WAVERING ON
ISSUE AND THAT JAPANESE ACTION ON OUTSTANDING COMMERICAL
AND TECHNICAL PROJECTS WOULD STRENGTHEN THOSE IN CABINET
WHO FAVOR FREE TRANSIT PRINCIPLE. GOJ NOT PARTICULARLY
ALARMED BY REPORT, BUT VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT IMPLICATION THAT
SINGAPORE PUTTING SQUEEZE ON THEM. END SUMMARY.

1. FONOFF ASIAN REGIONAL POLICY DIV DIR SAIKI TOLD EMBOFF
THAT SINGAPORIAN VICE PRIME MINISTER GOH CALLED ON
JAPANESE AMBASSADOR FEBRUARY 17 TO DISCUSS "SURPRISE
INDONESIAN PROPOSALS" MADE AT FIRST DAY OF MALACCA/SINGAPORE
STRAITS EXPERTS MEETINGS. ACCORDING TO GOH, INDONESIA
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UNEXPECTEDLY PROPOSED THAT SUPER TANKERS BOUND FOR

SINGAPORE OIL REFINERY COMPLEX BE EXEMPT FROM PROPOSED GOI TONNAGE AND DRAFT LIMITS FOR PASSAGE MALACCA STRAITS BECAUSE SUCH TRANSIT ONLY SHORT PORTION OF STRAITS.

2. GOH SAID THAT PROPOSAL HAS SPLINTERED OPINION IN GOS CABINET, WHICH HAS BEEN PLACED UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE FROM INDONESIA TO KEEP PACE WITH GOI AND GOM ON TRANSIT REGULATIONS. SOME CABINET MEMBERS BELIEVE THAT GOI PROPOSAL IS WORTH CONSIDERING BECAUSE IT ASSURES ACCESS FOR SINGAPORE-BOUND VLCC'S AND BECAUSE SINGAPORE DOES NOT BENEFIT MUCH FROM TRANSIT OF STRAITS BY TANKERS HEADED FOR POINTS BEYOND SINGAPORE. OTHERS IN CABINET STICK TO VIEW THAT SINGAPORE SHOULD MAINTAIN TRADITIONAL SUPPORT FOR FREE TRANSIT PRINCIPLE.

3. WHILE HE HESITATED TO LINK THE TWO ISSUES, GOH NOTED THAT RAPID AGREEMENT ON PART OF PRIVATE JAPANESE INTERESTS TO PROCEED ON SEVERAL OIL REFINERY PROJECTS MIGHT STRENGTHEN STAND OF THOSE IN CABINET WHO FAVOR FREE TRANSIT PRINCIPLE. GOH PERSONALLY FELT THAT GOS SUPPORT FOR GOJ POSITION ON STRAITS HAD BEEN FIRM IN PAST AND WOULD REMAIN SO IN FUTURE, BUT THAT FAVORABLE JAPANESE ACTION ON OUTSTANDING COMMERCIAL AND TECHNICAL AGREEMENTS WOULD ENCOURAGE THIS TREND. (SAIKI STRONGLY URGED THAT SUBSTANCE OF THIS PARAGRAPH NOT BE REPORTED.)

4. GOJ AMBASSADOR TO SINGAPORE FELT THAT GOJ'S VIEWS ON EROSION OF SUPPORT IN GOS CABINET FOR FREE TRANSIT PRINCIPLE WERE ALARMIST. RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY TOP LEVEL GOS OFFICIALS SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT RAPID CHANGE IN SINGAPOREAN POSITION UNLIKELY. HE FELT, HOWEVER, THAT BOTH GOI INITIATIVE AND STIR OF INTEREST IN GOS CABINET HAD BEEN ACCURATELY DESCRIBED, AND THAT GOJ SHOULD BE WARY.

5. IN ADDITION TO REPEATING REQUEST THAT SUBSTANCE PARA 3 NOT BE REPORTED, SAIKI ASKED THAT US OFFICIALS REFRAIN FROM DISPLAYING KNOWLEDGE OF GOH MEETING WITH GOJ AMBASSADOR DURING CONVERSATIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THIRD COUNTRIES.

6. COMMENT: REPORT IS CLEARLY VERY SENSITIVE TO GOJ AND WE URGE THAT IT BE VERY CLOSELY HELD. OBVIOUS IMPLICATION IS THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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GOS TRYING TO USE FREE PASSAGE ISSUE TO SQUEEZE ECONOMIC CONCESSIONS OUT OF JAPAN. WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION OF "SURPRISE" GOI PROPOSAL. HODGSON

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